



Pat Tillman Memorial
Saturday, May 8, 2004
Sun Devil Stadium
Tempe, Arizona

Good morning.

Pat Tillman entered my consciousness when a newspaper first published that now-famous photo of him perched atop a light post above a football field, where he was said to have meditated.

When I saw that photo, I knew he was a man walking a path in life that he cut for himself. Nothing I have heard about him since then has disabused me of that notion. He stuck it out with the Arizona Cardinals when he was offered an attractive and somewhat cushier position with the St. Louis Rams – because he had a burning desire to turn the Cardinals around.

He later walked away from the Cardinals to serve as an Army Ranger, because he felt he owed a debt of gratitude to a society that had given him such a luxurious life.

He was a man of tremendous physical strength who used it to defend his friends, inspire teammates, and protect people half a world away. The world knows him as a fallen warrior, but most of you know him far better than that.

You know his life in intimate detail, and you have stories about him that will keep you laughing for the rest of your lives. I hope we hear a few of those stories today.

Paying tribute to Pat Tillman is not easy, because so much has been said about him by a public that really knows so little about this complex, thoughtful and intense guy.

Standing here, I am reminded of Pericles, the Greek general who so famously honored the fallen soldiers of the Peloponnesian War, around 400 BC.

Initially, Pericles found himself at a loss for words, unable to fathom that he could have anything worthy of uttering, because the warriors' accomplishments spoke for themselves and could not be improved upon.

He worried that those who knew a soldier personally would find his tribute shamefully inadequate and impersonal. And he worried that those who did not know a fallen soldier would write off his stories of their heroism as tales simply too tall to believe.

Tell me about it.



If you knew Pat Tillman, you have more great stories, more insights, and a better sense of his essence than I can possibly describe today. And those of us who did not know him have found his various exploits to be the stuff of Hollywood movie scripts.

Just as we are so proud of Pat Tillman, so Pericles was bursting with pride for his fallen Athenians. More than 2,400 years ago, he described the great Athenian society and the men of extreme valor who were both its products and its greatest defenders.

Pericles was impressed by his warriors not just because they were brave soldiers, but because they were Athenians, embodying everything that the great city had to offer – culture, education, tolerance, diversity and freedom.

As a city of great advancement and cosmopolitan sophistication, Athens became the envy of other city states – and often targets of their aggression. “Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states,” Pericles said. “We are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few. This is why it is called a democracy.”

As soldiers defending such a great city, Pericles marveled at their willingness to give up their lives of privilege to defend it on behalf of others. He lauded these warriors for “choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting.”

And he reminded survivors that the actions of the soldiers who did not come home would become woven into Athens’ history and culture. They became a part of its daily life, and they contributed to its strength.

Though Pericles spoke of his beloved Athens and its mighty Athenian citizens, he may as well have been talking about modern America and people like Pat Tillman.

There is more to Pat’s life than its ending, and we have come to share that today. He lost his life in Afghanistan, but he left his imprimatur on us all. He kept us cheering, laughing – and from time to time, scratching our heads. The unique path he walked in life has made him a colorful thread that we now weave into the fabric of this community, and today is the day we begin to celebrate that.

Just as ancient soldiers’ timeless acts of bravery and sacrifice helped to build on the definition of Athens, so does Pat Tillman’s story add to the history of ASU ... the Arizona Cardinals ... Tempe ... Arizona ... and indeed America.

So let the story telling begin. As we celebrate his life, I want to know a few things.

- I want to know why Pat Tillman climbed on top of light poles to meditate.
- I want to know why he grew his hair so long.



- I want to know what moved him to beat up that guy who bullied his friend in high school.
- I want to know all the inspiring, amusing, quirky and downright funny things there are to know about Pat Tillman.

And I want to congratulate all of you here who knew Pat Tillman for choosing to celebrate his life in this way. Meeting his death with this bold celebration of his unique life is proof that you were paying attention to the example he set for us all.

In closing, let me take a moment to acknowledge Pat's friends and family. Pericles would conclude that you are as worthy of homage as Pat, because you influenced his great life. And you are carrying on in his absence. As a general of Athens, it was Pericles' duty to offer wreaths of victory to those who won the great wars and contests of the day.

On the day of his memorable speech to the survivors of the fallen warriors, he offered a victory wreath to soldiers' families – both as a proxy for their missing sons and brothers and as a tribute to their own contributions. Today, I offer the Tillman family that same tribute, with an Arizona flag.

"The state thus offers a valuable prize, as the garland of victory in this race of valor, for the reward both of those who have fallen and their survivors," Pericles concluded. "And where the rewards for merit are the greatest – there are found the best citizens."

Thank you.